

**Drug Demand  
Reduction  
Program**

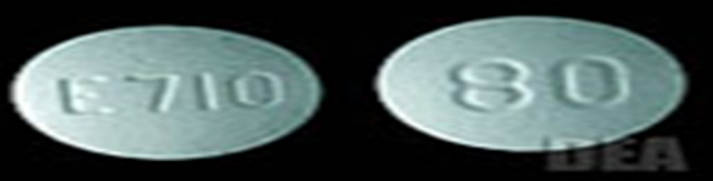
# Did You Know? Face the Facts OxyContin

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OxyContin, which received FDA approval in 1995, is a prescription painkiller used for mild to moderate pain control. It is a time-released version of the drug oxycodone, which has similar effects to heroin.

When used correctly, it can ease the chronic pain felt by those suffering from cancer or other debilitating diseases. It is not safe to take it without having it prescribed by your doctor.



Studies have shown that abuse of this drug is growing and has reached epidemic proportions. OxyContin abusers have been known to rob pharmacies for the drug, forge prescriptions, and steal from patients with a legitimate prescription. Some abusers go see many different doctors to get prescriptions. This is called “doctor shopping.” When abused, it can be taken in a number of different ways including chewing the tablets, snorting crushed tablets, or dissolving and injecting the liquid contents. All of these methods bypass the timed release feature of the tablet, thereby speeding up the effects of the medication into the user’s system. This dramatically increases the risk of an overdose, which can slow down or stop breathing, leading to death.



**Side effects (taken as prescribed or illegally):** Dry Mouth, Constipation, Confusion, Lightheadedness, Sedation, Slowed Breathing, Nausea/Vomiting, Headache, Sweating, Euphoria, and Mental Clouding

**Toxic Side Effects/Overdose Symptoms:** Dizziness or Weakness, Seizures, Loss of Consciousness or Coma, and Slowed breathing leading to complete respiratory failure resulting in death

Prescription medications were developed with specific uses in mind, and can be very effective in treating individuals with the medical need for these medications; however, using these drugs without the supervision of a physician or for purposes different from their intended use can lead to serious adverse consequences, including death from overdose and physical addiction. Because many prescription drugs are often opiate based. When abused, some prescription drugs can be as addictive and dangerous as illegal drugs. Which prescription drug will be the most abused changes every so often, the prescription drug that is currently the most problematic is OxyContin, a strong opiate based painreliver. According to the office of Drug Control Policy, abuse of prescription pain killers abuse now ranks second — only behind marijuana — as the Nation's most prevalent illegal drug problem.

Source of Information: DEA; NIDA; SAMSHA